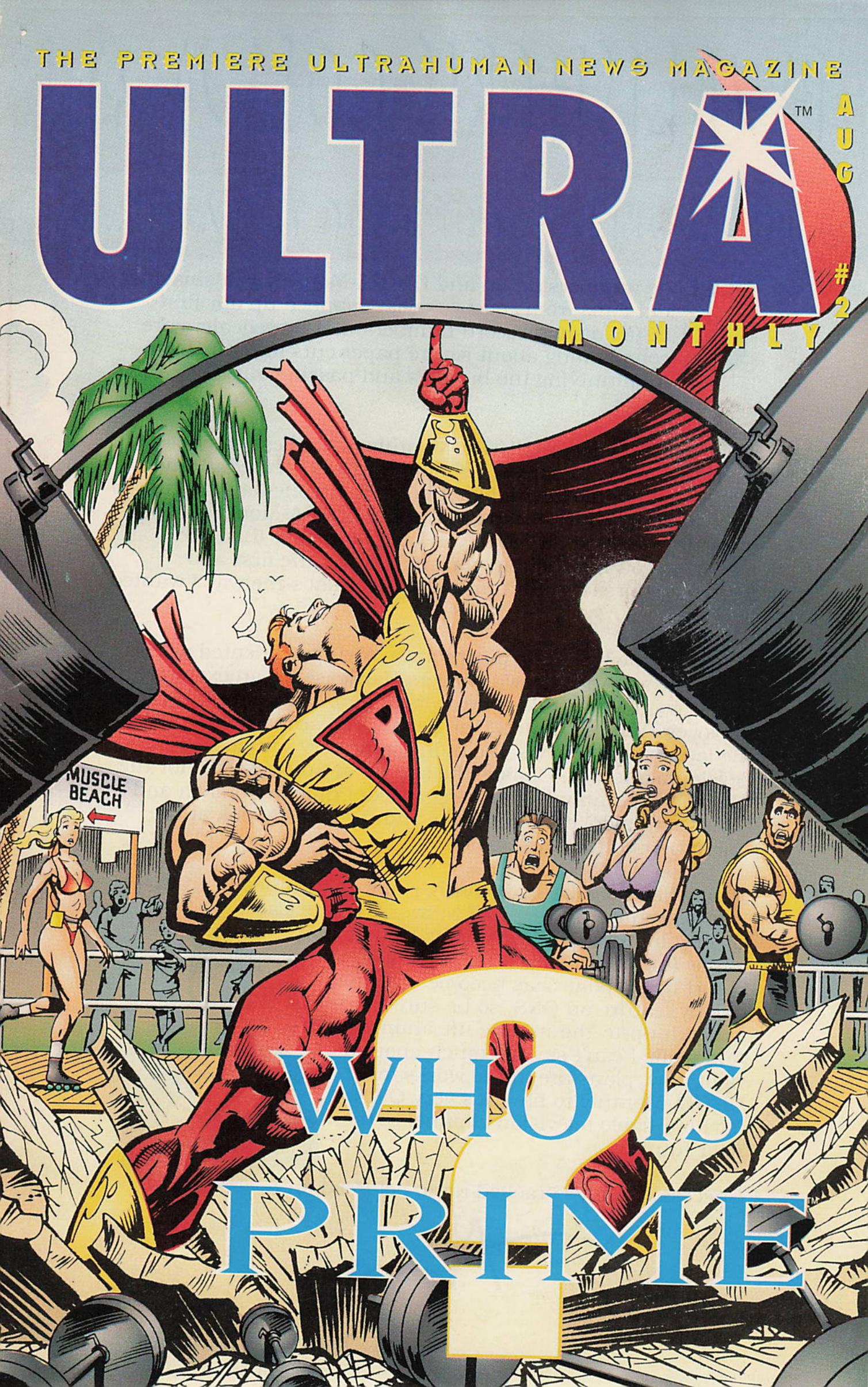
THE PREMIERE ULTRAHUMAN NEWS MAGAZINE

ULTRA™

AUG #2

MONTHLY



WHO IS PRIME?

PUBLISHER'S COLUMN

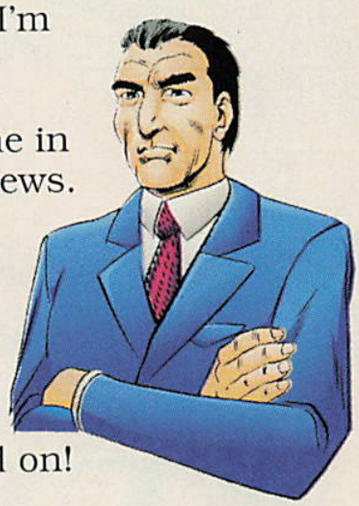
THE WORLD ACCORDING TO BAKER...

The numbers are in and ULTRA-Monthly is a smash hit! Fans from coast to coast snapped up our first issue in such record numbers that newsdealers are complaining about severe paper cuts and ropeburn from untying the bundles and passing out ULTRA to the multitudes.

What did you expect? ULTRA-Monthly is the best damn magazine in the business. I should know—I created it! And there's nothing out there like it because no one has the guts to publish an in-your-face magazine like ULTRA-Monthly. If you want the latest on all the ultras look no further than the magazine you now hold in your hands. It's the first and foremost source for ultra info--because that's the way I wanted it!

This issue we live up to our promise of unprecedented access to the ultras. April Brown corners Hardcase for an exclusive interview in which this controversial hero talks about his life, his loves, and his future. Our Newswatch section reports all the late-breaking news, including some very unusual developments with Choice, the superstar spokesmodel for the Choice Corporation. Tom Wong tracks Prime in Somalia and Southern California. And Thom Hunter takes a look at the "men" behind the ultra mask.

Meanwhile the ULTRA-Monthly empire continues to grow. You've seen me on the GNS Network, where Carol Dickey and I host Ultrahumans Update. I'm happy (but not the least bit surprised) to report that Update has become a regular weekly feature on GNS, so be sure to tune in to catch up-to-the-minute ultrahuman news. And while I can't say too much about it right now, plans are in the works for ULTRA-Monthly to have it's very OWN 24-hour cable television channel in the near future.



Success IS all it's cracked up to be! Read on!

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Slings & Arrows

READERS sound off

HARDCASE RETURNS

Bravo for Hardcase! His place is on the streets fighting crime, not in front of a camera making some senseless action picture. I wish America's greatest hero all the success in the world for his return to public life.

Maria Burruss
Vero Beach, FL

It's bad enough Hardcase and his Squad buddies blew up half of LA last spring. Now Hardcase is busting up bank buildings and smashing police cars into scrap in pursuit of his unique brand of "justice." He's going to wish he kept his identity a secret when the lawsuits catch up with him.

Alan Sessa
Houston, TX

Does anyone realize how much publicity Hardcase got for his rumble at the bank? If Hardcase wasn't trying to build a movie career, how eager would he have been to take on Headknocker?

Ivan Rothmiller
San Diego, CA

Hardcase offers his own views of the subject in this issue's exclusive interview.
— Al

SAN FRANCISCO ULTRAS

A couple high-powered characters like Elena La Brava and J.D. Hunt don't both wind up in an out-of-control cable car at the crack of dawn by accident. It's some kind of gag. No one got hurt besides that guy in the car, which cinches the deal.

Carol Ortega
Columbia, SC

Suppose for a second the blast of light that knocked out the cable car and the appearance of those costumed weirdos is related. How many people were on that car? Fifty? Sixty? What if EVERY ONE of them turns into an Ultra?

Les Powell
Aspen, CO

PRIME

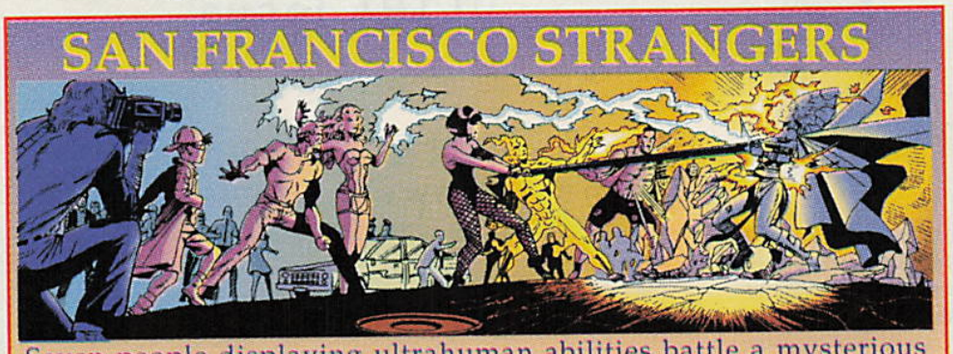
What kind of hero beats

up a high school gym teacher? This guy's a real sicko.

Michael Kaplan
Los Angeles, CA

If Prime knocks out crack houses, that's good enough for me. This city has gone to hell in the last couple years, especially since The Squad packed it in. It's about time someone looked out for the little guys.

Mike Kalustian
Reseda, CA



Seven people displaying ultrahuman abilities battle a mysterious woman on the streets of San Francisco as reported in *ULTRA-Monthly* #1. The group now identifies itself as The Strangers. Read the interview with The Stranger's own Elena La Brava in *ULTRA-Monthly* #3

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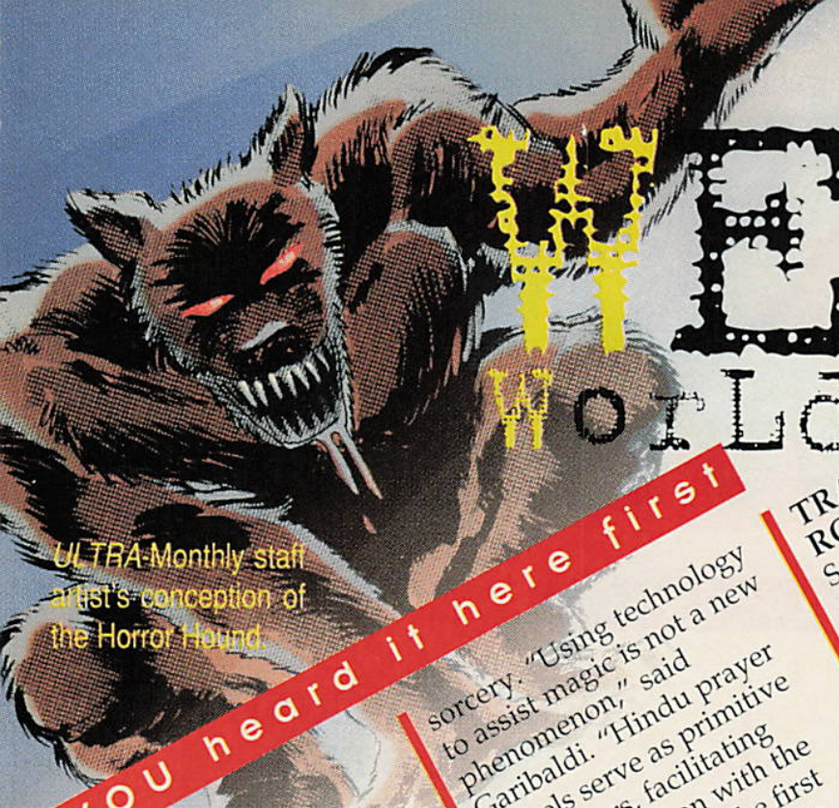
It's a Weird World



ULTRA-Monthly staff artist's conception of the Horror Hound.

YOU heard it here first

Revelations."

Several Los Angeles psychics report a similar vision. "He was mighty tall, that's for sure," said one woman, who identified herself as Queen La. "He was all wrapped up in metal and had this red cloak. Half his face was shot away. I saw him in the sky just before that building blew up," said La, referring to the midnight explosion at the exclusive A.M. Club, Los Angeles.

SPECTRAL FIGURE APPEARS OVER LOS ANGELES

A frightening ghostly figure several stories tall appeared in the night skies of Los Angeles. It was visible for miles around to those with psychic sensitivity.

"This is a portent of great evil," said Obiliox Diabolon, a Santa Monica warlock. "He was surely one of the Great Circle, the dark council that holds sway over the sixteenth ring of the local cosmos. This could be one of the signs foretold by the Book of

sorcery. "Using technology to assist magic is not a new phenomenon," said Garibaldi. "Hindu prayer wheels serve as primitive computers, facilitating communication with the gods. But this is the first time I've discovered an actual computer program designed to summon the devil."

The virus is spread through the nation-wide computer data net, residing in the data bases of the world's largest on-line computer services. Virtually everyone connected to a telecommunications service is likely contaminated by the virus. Garibaldi was unable to say how many computers were necessary to summon Satan, or when such an event would take place. Regarding combating the insidious virus, "In the absence of a priest, I recommend a good anti-virus program," Garibaldi said.

COMPUTER VIRUS UNLEASHED BY SORCERER

Computers all over the country are infected by a supernatural computer virus. The virus reconfigures hard drives into individual pieces of a specific, magical pattern. When enough computers have been configured, they will join together by modem and summon Satan to the earth.

The discovery was made by Fishbein Garibaldi, a parapsychologist who specializes in high-tech

TRAIL OF ROTTING FLESH

Something big, mean, and ugly is on the loose in Southern California. And it's on the trail of something weirder. A property manager came face-to-face with the terrifying "bloodhound" in the empty office of a San Fernando Valley office building.

"The building was broken into the night before, and I was cleaning up," said building manager Danielle Lanphear. "I found this weird gunk on the floor. It was crusty and dried up, and seemed like skin or something.

"While I'm looking at the glop a shadow comes over me. I look up and there it was. It was human shaped, but it had this nose like a bloodhound. It takes a whiff of this stuff. Then it goes back out the way it came in." Lanphear claims the thing seemed to be tracking something. "Just like a hound," she said.

NIGHTMARE HORROR PURSUES

YOU heard it here first

ULTRA-Monthly staff artist's conception of the Horror Hound.

It's a Weird World

NewsWat

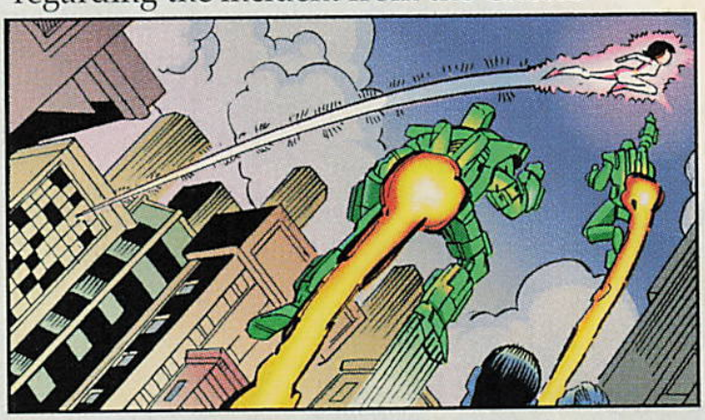
NEWS from around the world

CHOICE CONFRONTS ARMORED FOES OVER SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO.
Choice, the popular spokesmodel for the Choice Corporation, engaged in a running ariel duel with several armored opponents high above San Diego.

Rush hour commuters, stalled in traffic on California's Interstate 5, looked on in horror as Choice felled a flying enemy with beams of energy. "I'm just going to pick up the kids from the ex, and then I see the flash, almost blinding, in the sky," motorist Jerry Jones said. "She must'a hit one real hard, because this tank-thing was falling from the sky — right for the freeway!" motorcyclist Anne Chien stated. Other witnesses said the armored form nearly struck the freeway before it was caught by one of its flying comrades. Choice then used the confusion to make her escape.

Close-up footage from a local news helicopter confirmed the flying woman's identity as Choice, spokesmodel for the Choice Corporations family of products, most notably Diet Zing Cola. An official statement regarding the incident from the Choice Corporation is to be released shortly (see **ULTRABUCKS**).



Choice battles mechanized foes over San Diego

DOZENS PERISH IN CLUB FIRE

LOS ANGELES
An early-morning fire swept through the penthouse chambers of the AM Club, claiming at least twelve lives and causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in property damage.

The fire followed quickly upon a mysterious blast that rocked the exclusive club shortly after midnight. "One minute the place is quiet, everything seems fine, then I hear this explosion," Lydia Thompson, security guard at the Red Planet Bar one block from the building reported. "It was all over before the fire department even got here. It just went up so fast."

The sole survivor of the fire, a woman in her eighties, was rushed to the intensive care unit of Mercy General Hospital, where she died just before dawn.

In what may be a related incident, hospital security guards report seeing a woman dressed in a "theatrical costume with a blue cape" leave the intensive care unit just moments after the victim died. The cause of the explosion and fire remain under investigation.

MYSTERIOUS EXPLOSION DAMAGES HARDCASE HOME

MALIBU
Neighbors of Tom Hawke, also known as Hardcase, report an ear-splitting afternoon explosion followed by a column of black smoke originating on the grounds of the ultrahero's

Malibu Canyon home. "My mother, who's visitisng California, was sure it was an earthquake," Hardcase neighbor Jannine Johnson said. "Then we saw smoke. I called the fire department right away." Los Angeles county fire officials confirmed that the home, was partially destroyed by the blast. Hardcase's agent, Sol Gernstein, reported no injuries resulting from the explosion. He declined to speculate on the cause of the explosion.

POLICE BATTLE MONSTERS

SAN FRANCISCO
Two officers suffered second-degree burns while a third sustained a mild concussion in a battle with three monstrous creatures on a San Francisco street.

The monsters escaped and remain at large.

Officer Michael Doran was first on the scene, responding to a shoplifting call at J & D Market on Geary Street. Witnesses report seeing Doran pursue a teenage male into an alley a half-block away from the store. Six shots were fired, accompanied by Doran's terrified screams.

Jui Chih Chiang, a neighboring merchant, described the events. "It was raining, so not many folks were out. I'm closing up for the night when these two kids — a boy and a girl — rushed out of the alley beside this huge, grey creature. Two police cars slammed on their breaks and a bunch of cops piled out. Then everything happened really fast. The girl looked like she exploded. Fire and steam came out all over her. I think some of it hit the police. The boy she was with must have got hit bad because he just collapsed, then I lost sight of him. Then the big guy grabbed the girl and the two of them ran away."

Lieutenant Jacob Rome, spokesman for the San Francisco Police Department, would neither confirm nor deny details of the story. "Our officers were treated at Metropolitan Hospital for injuries sustained in this incident. We are not prepared to make any further statements at this time," he said.

DEATH TOLL MOUNTS FROM ULTRABRAWL

MEXICO CITY
Mexican authorities report at least a dozen people were killed in the collapse of an apartment building during a battle between unidentified ultras in Mexico City. It is feared the death toll will climb higher as the building is uncovered. Officials report a single female ultra engaged a number of flying, armored soldiers in a suburb of the city.

ULTRA FLASH

PRIME BATTLES CREATURE

San Fernando Valley.
The mysterious ultra known as Prime wrecked a convenience store while engaging an unidentified ultranormal foe in battle.

"I was punching up a Lotto ticket when my roof explodes, " explained Day 'N Night convenience store owner Esteban Martinez. "This big, ugly mother made a hole the size of my car when he hit the floor right on top of the beef jerky. I'd say it was ten, twelve feet tall, and muscled like big telephone cables. The worst thing was, though, was it was missing an arm, and all this goop was pumping out."

Several customers were in the store at the time of the attack. All escaped without significant injury. Witnesses report Prime decapitated the monster. Shortly thereafter the creature left the scene, sans head. Neither Prime nor the monster have been sighted since.

CROSSFIRE

KELLY burke

Register Ultras? They Can't Even Deliver My Mail!

Register ultrahumans? Ridiculous. The federal government can't even deliver my mail, and it's got my address printed on it for any idiot to see. Congress can't balance their own check books, much less take on the task of tracking, registering, and training ultras when and where they may appear. The deficit is deep enough without appointing an army of inquisitors to chase across the country after every damn fool wannabe wearing a cape.

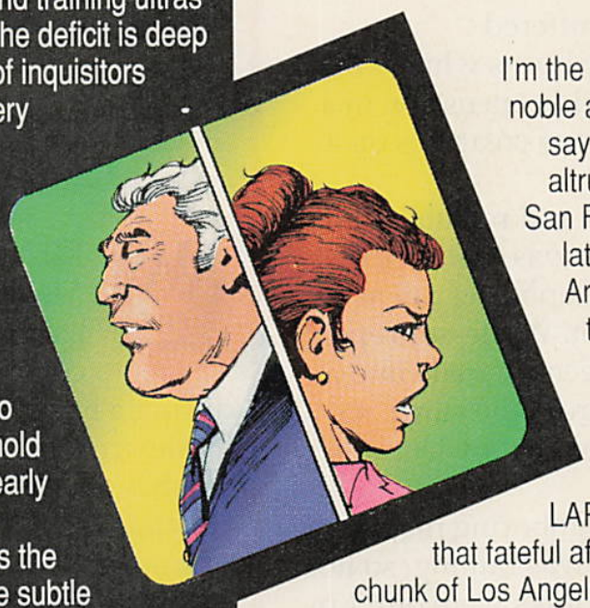
Like most crackpot liberal notions, registering Ultras seems like a good idea until you examine the particulars. What exactly is an ultra? Hardcase performs superhuman feats in front of a camera, but so does Arnold Schwarzenegger. Is Arnold an ultra? UltraTech's Prototype is clearly on the cutting edge of technological innovation, but is the man who wears the suit an ultrahuman? How about more subtle powers? I saw a Russian kid once who could beat a dozen chess opponents at once... blindfolded. For that matter, my cousin Vinnie is a mean hand at three card monte. Exactly where do you draw the line?

There is no need to create a pile of new legislation to account for ultrahumans. Ultras in this country are already governed by a perfectly adequate body of law: the Constitution of the United States. If a U.S. citizen breaks the law, he is subject to prosecution.

There is no denying the destructive potential of the ultras. Only a fool would suggest we citizens rely on the mercurial good intentions of a handful of costumed vigilantes for protection. If need be, the US Army should be deployed in our nation's streets to battle ultras where they threaten the peace. But under no conditions should the government engage in a wild goose chase to round up and regulate those precious few ultras that are presently at liberty in the country.

Seeking ultras for registration is just the first step toward registering the man in the street on the basis of his race, religion, or political affiliation. After all the ultras are rounded up, YOU will be next.

JACKSON hunt



Now Is The Time To Register Ultrahuman Powers

Have you seen the crater in Los Angeles? You know, the one where D.J. Blast! fought his last battle. Looks like something you'd see in a war—a nuclear war. The Squad, for all their good intentions, wrecked twenty-five square miles of Los Angeles.

We've been lucky so far.

I'm the first to admit The Squad was a noble and heroic group. But who is to say every ultra group will prove as altruistic? Look at recent events in San Francisco. Look at Hardcases's lates "adventure" in Los Angeles. Are citizens of these cities happy to be ultra stomping grounds? I think not.

Crime fighting is a serious business that should be left to the professionals. Had an LAPD swat team been on the spot that fateful afternoon in March 1991, a good chunk of Los Angeles might have been spared the tender mercies of DJ Blast!'s final fury. More importantly, Squad members Forsa and DJ Blast! might still be alive, and Starburst might not be wasting away on hospital life support.

A freak accident or a mysterious twist of the double helix no more qualifies a person to be a vigilante than putting a ball through a hoop qualifies a basketball star to be role model and moral authority. It is past time the government intervened to comprehensively identify, catalog, register, and—if need be—ban these ultras.

I'm not suggesting we get rid of the ultras. Ultras are unjustly misunderstood and feared. But even as we strive to understand the ultras, we should train and register them. After all, if they are to serve the public good, is it too much to ask they receive the same training as the police, fire department, and members of our armed forces?

Shielded by the umbrella of local or federal authority, well-meaning ultras would be protected from the civil suits that are doubtless pending as a result of the collateral damage they cause. Most importantly, licensing of ultras would make these paranormal beings answerable to the everyday people they are sworn to protect.

Registration and accountability or anarchy and destruction. Act now or the next ultrahuman confrontation could destroy YOUR neighborhood.

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That "it's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game" stuff is a bunch of garbage. That's why we've got two ways to keep you winning: the Super Advantage and asciiPad,™ both for the Super NES.® They've got the kind of enhancements you need for today's fiercest games—features like TURBO-FIRE (up to 32 shots per second), hands-free AUTO TURBO and SLOW-MOTION CONTROL. With all these killer features and cool styling, it's no wonder they're the #1 enhanced controllers for the Super NES. So take your pick, and then take on the neighborhood. With this kind of power, you'd just better learn how to be a gracious winner.

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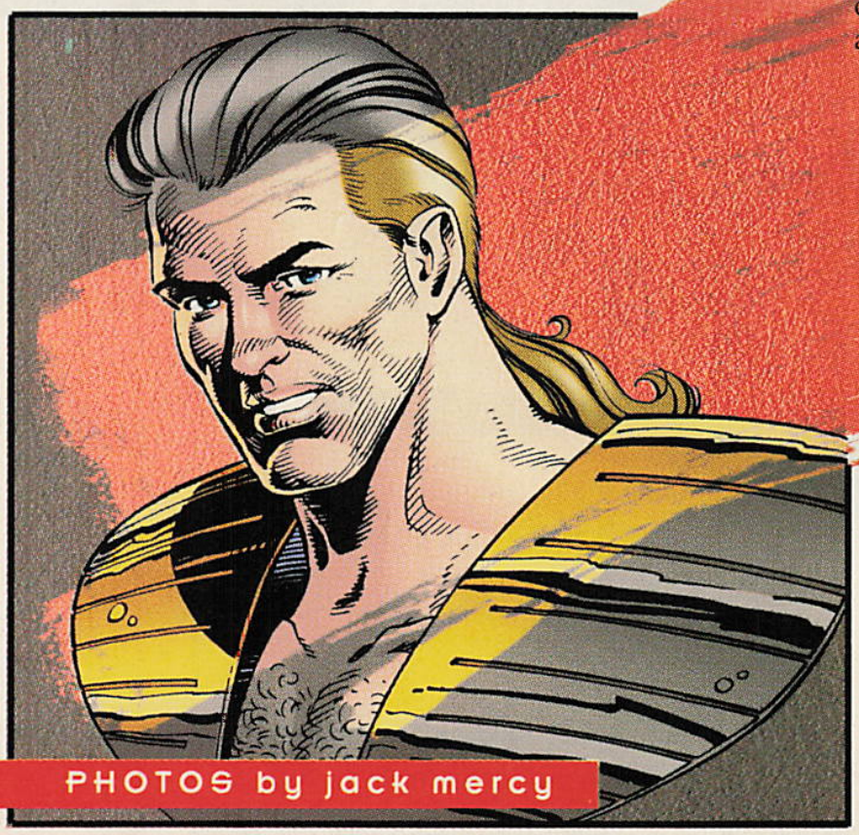
HARDCASE

APRIL brown

I caught up with Hardcase between takes on the set of his second film, *Hardcase: The Movie*. Hardcase is impressive in person. More genuine than I expected. He's got a winning smile and movie-star good looks, but I sense something real at the core of this man, which I can't say for most of the action hero movie stars I've met. I also sense pain in this man, pain at the loss of his teammates from The Squad, and pain from his own uncertainty about his role as the world's best-known ultra. I also got a close look at Hardcase's uniform. It's not for show, folks — it's real, right down to the chains on the ankles and waist. The man radiates masculinity, power and pride.



PHOTOS by jack mercy

ULTRA: Well first off, since you're a big superhero, I wonder what it is you fear the most?

HARDCASE: (pause) Life is full of uncertainties and that can lead to things you never expected. Things that can become your fears. I guess I mainly have a fear of failure. Whether it's the failure to save lives or to succeed in my endeavors.

ULTRA: Why did you retire?

HARDCASE: Well, it was more of a sabbatical than retirement. I guess I felt guilty over the death of my teammates. There was a time when I doubted my ability to do anything on my own because I'd let my friends down.

ULTRA: In what way did you let them down?

HARDCASE: Maybe I could have fought harder and they'd still be alive. But there's no way to know for sure. All I know is, I have to live with that failure for the rest of my life.

ULTRA: Why "Hardcase?" Did you come up with that name? Does it have any significance?

HARDCASE: I wanted to call myself "Hardbody," but some comic book company had the name trademarked. Basically, I wanted a handle that would get across my near invulnerability and also suggest I was a tough guy, so Hardcase seemed like a good choice.

ULTRA: What did you do before you became Hardcase?

HARDCASE: Mostly menial jobs. I delivered pizzas, waited on tables, worked for Cal-Trans cleaning up the freeways. My goal was to be an actor, but it's a hard career to break into. I only managed to get some work as an extra, and a few walk-ons in the daytime soaps. Oh yeah, I did a week on *Divorce Court*. But, then, everyone has.

ULTRA: How exactly did you get your powers?

HARDCASE; Good question. I wish I knew the answer. All I know is one day I was in a casting session for a new TV pilot, and my muscles started growing like crazy. My clothes ripped off. It was like that old TV show, *The Hulk*.

ULTRA: Well, then ... that begs the question, why did you come back to the hero business?

HARDCASE: I stopped an ultra from robbing a bank. He was one tough S.O.B. The experience taught me that I could make a change out there. But more importantly. I realized there was a lot of unanswered questions that I needed the answers to. Like where the creature that attacked us — The Squad, I mean — came from.

ULTRA: Since we're on that subject, what happened in that

HARDCASE: I still don't have all the answers. All I know is, some strange, metallic creature came out of nowhere and attacked us. It was able to break my ribs, dislocate an arm and easily knocked me unconscious. I've yet to meet something that powerful since. But I still don't know what it was or why it attacked us. All I know is, it laid a heavy toll on us.

ULTRA: Will you form another Squad?

HARDCASE: I doubt it. I don't need the responsibility right now.

ULTRA: People came to depend on The Squad in the brief time you were together. Some people, especially in South-Central Los Angeles, feel you've abandoned them in favor of your movie career.

HARDCASE: We did a lot of good work, but there were a few cases where innocent people got hurt. I haven't abandoned the people of Los Angeles. I'm back to fighting crime. But things have changed in the last year. There's more of us ultras around. That's where the police and the city want me to spend my time.

ULTRA: You've retained a talent agent, Sol Gernstein, to advance your career. Is it appropriate for a hero to market himself?

HARDCASE: Why not? Sports heroes are getting six mill a season, after all. And people are offering me money to do what I always wanted to do. Act.

ULTRA: You call your work in HARDCASE: THE MOVIE and your first film, UNDERCOVER AGENT acting? It seems that you merely played yourself.

HARDCASE: Well, I'll admit I've been typecast from day one. But that's par for the course when you're a media figure. If my career does well enough, I hope to do a film version of *Macbeth*.

ULTRA: Macbeth? *Does the idea of playing a paranoid appeal to you?*

HARDCASE: Hey, it's my favorite Shakespeare play. Sue me!

ULTRA: Speaking of your movie career, rumor has it you've had a significant disagreement with Darren Doane, director of HARDCASE: THE MOVIE. *Any comment?*

HARDCASE: The only real problem is I left in the middle of a shoot to stop a bank robbery. We've smoothed things over.

ULTRA: Rumor has it that there was no love lost between you and your co-star Jason Kuttner.

HARDCASE: Jason's pure Hollywood and I'm a small town boy at heart. I'm not into the pouserville scene that passes for hip in this town. Let's just say that he and I are two different people and we don't hang out.

ULTRA: You've charged in the past that the press has been unfair to you. Don't you think that an ultra such as yourself, pursuing a media career, should be the subject of more that the usual degree of scrutiny?

HARDCASE: Hell no! I mean, if my life is an open book, what about yours? Why can't I know every detail of your private life? After all, you're published. The press thinks they have a right to lie about people's lives and blow things out of proportion, no matter how hurtful or irrelevant such stories are. I think it's appalling and even more so since they started zoomin' on me.

ULTRA: On that note, the tabloids have romantically linked you with corporate spokesmodel Choice. Any truth to those rumors?

HARDCASE: We're developing a close bond.

ULTRA: How do you think Linda Warren (Starburst of The Squad) would feel if she came out of her coma and found this out. You two were reported engaged.

HARDCASE: End of interview.

"Life is full of surprises and that can lead to things you never expected-- things that can become your fears."

DEVIL take the HINDMOST

THOM hunter

They're going to be heroes, you know, those San Francisco freaks who explode and fly and kick up the devil's own wind. And that muscle-bound steroid case with the tiny head and the big "P" on his chest. The media machine is already in motion, with guttersnipe Al Baker at the master controls, pulling out all the stops to balloon any circus freak with a flashy special effect into the second coming of... what? Michael Jordan? Bo Jackson? Michael Jackson? Somebody else named "Michael" or "Jackson?"

What exactly ARE the ultras? Easy enough to call them heroes and let it go, I suppose, but I thought heroes were people who DID something. Prime shakes down gym teachers, and Hardcase kicks down the doors of crack houses — without a warrant — and those San Francisco guys haven't done anything more than show up on the news. Although this is the MTV generation, so maybe you don't have to do more than flex and pout for the camera. If rapid edits and a smoke machine could make a dancer out of Vanilla Ice, I shouldn't be surprised by anything, but I still can't accept "hero" as a job title. "Activist," maybe, but hero?

The ultras are without precedent. I remember a Charles Bronson picture in the 70's about an ordinary citizen who turned vigilante and bumped a bunch of street hoods. Literature and legend are full of outlaw heroes, from Robin Hood to Jesse James to Bonnie and Clyde ...in lawless times, the lawless are the heroes. And sickos have been flipping out and attacking hookers and drug dealers for years. There was a guy just last spring who went hunting for women in New York with a crossbow. But while he might have considered himself a hero, to the rest of the country he was a menace, and rightly so, and I'm sure Jesse and the Barrow Gang weren't a pack of madcap, whacky screwballs when they were pointing the business end of a shooting iron at some knock-kneed bank clerk.

What's the difference between a nutcake with a crossbow and an ultra like Hardcase?

Simple.

It's the uniform.

Watch sports on television long enough and you'll think a football field is gargantuan. The thing scrolls on and on forever when the camera follows a long pass play or a broken-field scramble. But see a game in person and the first thing that strikes you is how SMALL the field really is. It's amazing to consider how much trouble it is to get from one end of it to the other. Hell, even your average overweight NFL fan could jog from one end of the thing to another in half a minute or so.

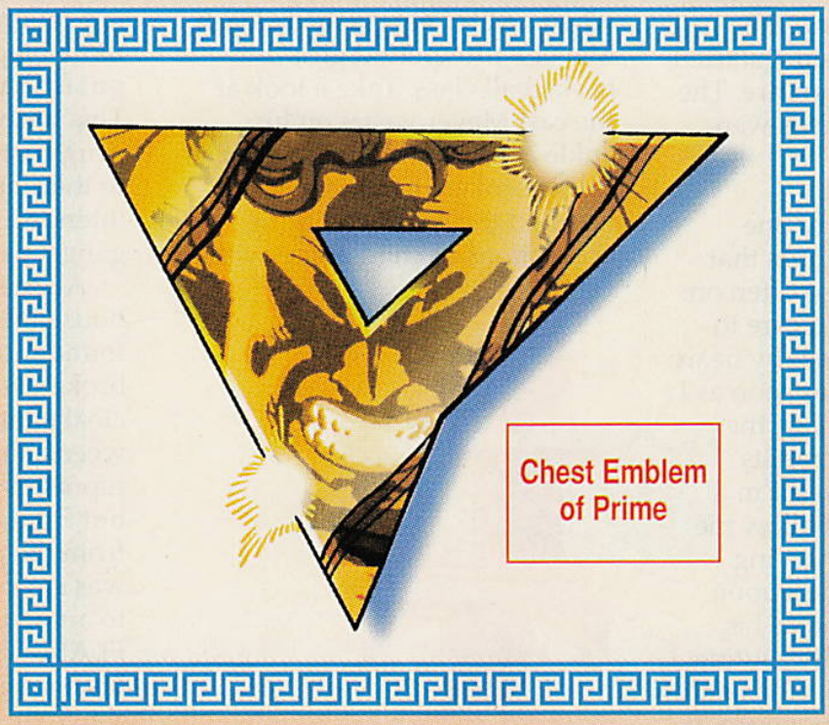
Television has a way of inflating even the most mundane images, but even television needs a little help. The San Francisco Strangers are a media sensation right

Thom Hunter is ULTRA-Monthly's correspondent-at-large. While his opinions do not necessarily reflect those of this magazine or its publisher, we will defend his constitutional rights to express those opinions and our right to publish it.

now, but just wait until some bright boy puts them in costumes, like those blue and gold duds Hardcase got from his studio. Then they'll really take off. I'm sure Al Baker has his tailor on the phone right now. Puff those guys up with some colorful clothes and you'll have a sensation on your hands. Sure, they'll look ridiculous in person, but they'll look great on television, and when the day is done, looking good on TV is all that really matters. If you don't believe me, ask Bill Clinton.

Imagine it! Prototype selling a credit card. "When I'm in a third world hot spot, I always pack a full charge in my repulsor rays, and I never forget my American Express card. My identity may be a closely guarded corporate secret, but with American Express, my steel-encased face is welcome by arms merchants world-wide." Or how about Hardcase pumping iron, cross-training, whipping the crap out of some fool in long underwear, then fixing the camera with his perfect smile and telling us to "Just Do It." Prime could sell insurance. "You're in good hands with Allstate, especially when a pinhead goof like me crashes through your roof."

But direct commercial endorsements are just the tip of the iceberg. Trading cards. Slush cups. Burger box meals for the kids at fast food drive-in windows. Children's pajamas, bed sheets, lunch boxes. Commemorative statues from the Franklin Mint. Key chains, wristwatches, hats, socks, jockey shorts. Might go for some Hardcase toilet paper myself. Substance is an illusion. Only the IMAGE matters.



While image can create media stars, can it create a hero? If the right spin doctors could get Ronald Reagan out of B-movies and into the White House, what can they do with someone like Prime? The ultras are uniquely positioned to become the world's next celebrity elite, fulfilling the yearning of the average joe, formerly satisfied by sports heroes, movie stars, and the British royalty, for the unattainable . But these guys don't drop balls, fumble their way through multiple takes, or soak up millions of dollars of tax-free income for offering silly little waves from the back of the royal coach — they actually brawl in the streets, breaking buildings, and sometimes seem to serve the public good.

But none of that matters, with the right uniform and a good press agent to handle the spin. This is the era of words, not deeds. Pose, don't perform. Punch up a simple, direct message, and don't let go until everyone in the nation is howling, "Where's the beef?" Choice might have been CREATED as a marketing asset! Hardcase has a savage Hollywood agent on his side, and Prototype's got a whole corporation behind him. The others would be well advised to follow suit. I might even consider taking the job myself ...

...if I wasn't busy down at the Salvation Army, trying to knit together a supersuit of my own. Hell, if all it takes to be a hero is a wild set of clothes, a snappy name, and some disgruntled angry young man attitude, I'm THERE, man ...!

--TH

ULTRA FOCUS

Somalia was a non-story. The Marines had gone home last May. Most of the cameras were gone long before their first departure, when it became evident Operation Restore Hope would not be Desert Storm, Part Two. Hungry children, United Nations relief efforts, and the occasional sniper in the outback provided a slim repast for a nation blooded on Gulf War gun-camera footage. Before long, only the hardcore news grunts were here, filing their stories for indifferent editors, maybe making the dreadful "human interest" slice of the news half-hour between the weather report and the talking pig piece. Then it started all over again. The gun fire. The bloodshed. The Marines were sent back.

Then came Prime.

He spoke but thirty-one words. Thirty-one words that have been repeated so often on any news show you'd care to name that I know them by heart: "Gentlemen, I came as soon as I could — after I heard on the news about those terrorists blocking food supplies! I'm PRIME, gentlemen! Follow me and consider those starving people SAVED!" Whereupon Prime proved as good as his word, single-handedly routing a unit of Somali rebels. And setting off a lemming-like stampede of the world's press corps back to this godsforsaken corner of Africa.

In the front of the pack was your humble correspondent, dispatched with a newly-minted *ULTRA-Monthly* press pass in hand, charged by Al Baker to "get to the bottom of this Prime thing!"

Fortunately, I did a little ground work before boarding my flight to oblivion. John F. Kennedy Junior High School is an unimpressive place — the usual west San Fernando Valley collection of hot concrete boxes and blacktop, surrounded on four sides by chain link fences and raging automobile traffic. Not the place you'd expect a legend to be born.

Look a little closer. Move past the clusters of nervously chattering teens to the yellow police line stretched around the gym. Sneak a peak at the hole in the roof, the hole Prime made when he literally crashed Coach Meyer's fifth period girls' basketball class. Take a look at the cast Meyer wears on his ankle and his arm, both of which Prime broke when he man handled the coach, spouting accusations of child abuse while the class looked on in terror.

This is the same guy who did the "defender of truth, justice, and the American way" routine in Somalia?

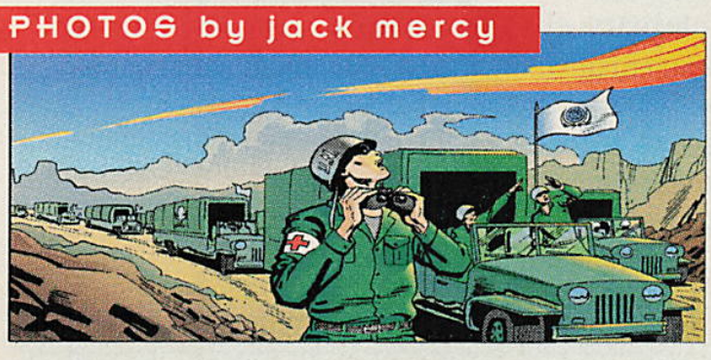
I then trekked out to Reseda, in the West San Fernando Valley, to check out the site of Prime's second known appearance. There wasn't much to see, even after I'd worked up the courage to leave my car. This is a rough neighborhood. One of those blocks where the police put up barricades on the streets. This is done, allegedly, to keep drug customers from coming in to their dealers, but it is really intended to keep the punks and gangsters penned behind walls.

All that stood of the crack house Prime destroyed was a foundation, a crazy scaffold of broken water pipes nearly cloaked in a riot of tinder-dry weeds. People don't talk to reporters in this neighborhood, but from what I put together from the police reports, Prime was supposed to have stood up to automatic weapons fire and a FLAMETHROWER while doing his own good job of burning down the house. A kid still tried to sell me crack when I walked back to my car. I'm sure there are still kids going hungry in Somalia tonight, Prime or no Prime.

I'll leave the debate over whether or not Ultras can make a difference to *ULTRA-Monthly*'s editorial page. My mission was to determine WHO IS PRIME, and as much as it risks my press pass, I have to admit I haven't the faintest notion.

But whatever he is, the answer isn't in Somalia. Answers or no, I'm on his trail, hustling the first flight out of Africa and back to the states. Al, please send cash. My credit cards have gone sour, and the guys at the airport have never heard of *ULTRA-Monthly*.

PHOTOS by jack mercy



STEVE wong

ULTRATECH AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS

More than one million dollars in scholarships were awarded by UltraTech to the winners of a recent video game competition. "This is not a frivolous contest," said UltraTech spokesman Stein Huuponnen. "The game players of today are the computer users of tomorrow. By studying the behavior of video game players, UltraTech learns how to create an interface that is efficient and attractive. The kids benefit from the attention and involvement of a major domestic high-tech firm. We hope this encourages them to consider a career in engineering."

UltraTech scholarship funds will be matched by several prestigious engineering universities. The top award went to nineteen-year-old Jimmy Ruiz for his high score in the video game Velocity Six, a virtual reality aerial combat game. It is rumored that UltraTech is considering a move into consumer electronics to broaden its commercial opportunities in the wake of government cuts in the defense industry.

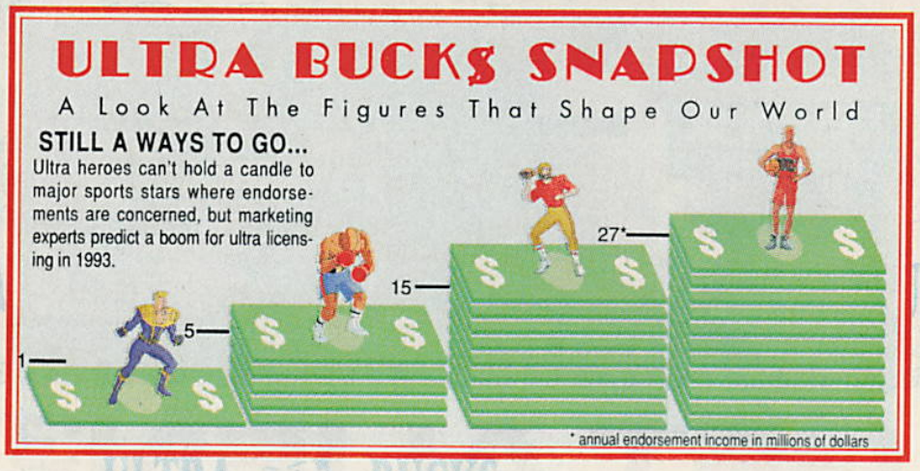
ULTRATECH ANNOUNCES CONFERENCE

UltraTech Vice President Stanley Leland will address stockholders and potential investors at a special conference. Leland will seek the support of bankers and other members of the business community in a major refinancing effort the corporation hopes to launch in the third quarter. Unidentified sources report UltraTech will introduce a new upgrade of Prototype at the conference. Prototype has not been seen in public since the weapons testing range accident.

CHOICE CORPORATION SPOKESMODEL AS AN ULTRA

Reacting swiftly to public reports of their spokesmodel Choice engaging in ultranormal activities (see NEWSWATCH), the Choice Corporation todayannounced that Choice is indeed an ultra, as had long been rumored. The battle between Choice and several armored foes above San Diego was merely the first public display of the powers of the world's newest ultra, according to a written statement released by the corporation.

Choice's opponents were a band of industrial saboteurs, The Interceptors. The statement claims The Interceptors recently attacked Choice manufacturing plants in Central and South America. According to the statement, the recent deaths in Mexico City were due to an Interceptors attack.



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